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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0562
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 1758
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 1448
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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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SUBJECT: NAWAZ SHARIF TOUCHES DOWN AT LAHORE

CLASSIFIED BY: Michael T. Jordan, Acting Principal Officer,
AMCONSUL Lahore, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Pakistani authorities permitted exiled former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif to enter Pakistan on Sunday November 25th, arriving at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport at approximately 6:30 p.m. local time via a personal aircraft of the Saudi royal family. Senior PML-N party leaders in Punjab province largely escaped political harassment although media reports and post contacts reported that several hundred PML-N party workers were detained the night before. There were also reports of scuffles between PML-N activists and police at the Lahore airport although the tense situation did not spiral out of control. End summary.

12. (C) Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan from exile in Saudi Arabia this evening. Unlike his previous attempt on September 10, government authorities did little or nothing to hinder his arrival. He returned via a personal aircraft owned by the Saudi royal family that touched down at approximately 6:30 p.m. In contrast to the previous attempt, security forces did not conduct a widespread political roundup of PML-N party leaders although they did attempt to limit the size of the crowd welcoming his return. PML-N sources told post that the government agreed to permit 100 PML-N supporters to greet Nawaz on the tarmac and another 8000 were permitted to be on or near the airport grounds to catch a glimpse of him. In addition, contacts stated the police did not permit PML-N party members from nearby districts to depart to Lahore Sunday morning in an attempt to contain the numbers descending there. In spite of this, as soon as touchdown was confirmed droves of people converged on the airport. PML-N and media contacts estimated the crowd at least in the tens of thousands.

13. (C) Post sources stated, however, that several hundred lower level PML-N members were detained overnight and throughout the day in and around Lahore. Only two senior PML-N members, however, were reported to have been detained on Saturday evening although they were released Sunday morning. They were former Punjab Member of the Provincial Assembly Rana Mushhood Khan and former Federal Minister for Labor and Manpower Ghulam Dasspair Khan. They informed post that they were released only after pressure from the Saudi royal family. At one point at the airport on Sunday afternoon, police baton charged and repulsed PML-N supporters who attempted to breach a police line. There

were no serious injuries reported. In addition, minutes before the plane landed some PML-N activists took over the airport lounge. The police this time attempted to negotiate with them to vacate the premises.

¶4. (C) After disembarking from the plane, Nawaz and Shahbaz waved to their supporters and were carried off to their vehicles by the enthusiastic crowd. At about 8:00 p.m. the Sharif brothers attempted to leave the airport grounds but all roads leading to the airport were clogged due to the spectacle. They planned to first visit the Data Gunj Buksh Shrine in Lahore before proceeding to their family estate Jati Umra, which is located about 20 kilometers from downtown Lahore. PML-N contacts predicted the entourage would not arrive there until Monday morning due to the crowds and traffic jams.

¶5. (C) Currently the situation in Lahore is tense but remains largely calm. In addition, there were no reports of media censorship and limited reports of preemptive detention tactics, at least in comparison to recent similar instances. The Saudi royal family also had an armored car delivered to Lahore yesterday for Nawaz's personal use. Post will continue to monitor the situation and update the Department as the situation develops.

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